



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Policy Manual

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Issuance:	37-C	School Vehicle Transportation – Routes, Passengers and Driving	

Purpose:

- A. This issuance establishes policy and procedure related to students, infants, and toddlers transported to school and school-related activities on school vehicles operated by the DCF OOE.
- B. Students, infants, and toddlers shall be provided transportation services in accordance with this policy, federal and State laws and regulations.
- C. Transportation services shall be provided, in accordance with the DCF Regional School's calendar for eligible students and eligible infants and toddlers living within the designated catchment area of the program.
- D. Students, infants, and toddlers transported on DCF OOE school vehicles shall be provided curb to curb transportation services in adherence with this policy.

Authority:

- N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1 et seq.
- N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2a
- N.J.A.C. 6A:27-1 et seq.
- N.J.A.C. 6A:27-11.3(b)

Policy:

- A. In each DCF Regional School, the Head Bus Driver or designee, in collaboration with the Education Supervisor (ES) shall be responsible for the establishment of school vehicle routes.
- B. The ES and Head Bus Driver or designee shall confer to make transportation decisions due to weather or other hazardous conditions.

- C. To ensure the safe transport of all persons, School Vehicle Drivers and Escorts shall observe all safety rules for boarding students, infants, toddlers, and their related equipment such as wheelchairs.
- D. Drivers shall abide by all established rules when driving a school vehicle.
- E. Any child under the age of 8 years old and a height of 57 inches shall be secured according to N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2a.

Procedures:

1. Establishment and Maintenance of School Vehicle Routes

1. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall arrange appropriate transportation services and establish routes to include the course of travel with designated times and stops for each student:
 - a. The Head Bus Driver or designee and Driver shall plan student routes and stops to ensure maximum student safety based upon, but not limited to:
 - 1) Students' street addresses;
 - 2) Need for adaptive equipment;
 - 3) Medical issues and concerns;
 - 4) Wheelchair requirements;
 - 5) Ambulatory and non-ambulatory status;
 - 6) Infants' and students' need for child safety restraint systems; and
 - 7) Escort requirements;
 - b. All routes shall originate at the RS. Exceptions shall be authorized by the OOE Director, Deputy Director, or designee;
 - c. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall ensure that there are current written directions for each established route;
 - d. At no point shall a Driver park or place a school vehicle into a parking position where it would need to be placed in reverse;
 - e. An established route including the scheduled pick-up and drop-off times shall be adhered to by the assigned driver;
 - f. The Driver shall not change the route except for specific road conditions such as a detour; and
 - g. When a detour is in effect for an extended period, the Driver shall report this to the Head Bus Driver or designee.
2. As appropriate, the ES, Head Bus Driver, or designee shall notify, the parent(s), guardian(s), and students, of the initial arrangements for transportation services.
3. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall examine designated stops, as necessary, but at least monthly, to address and review issues regarding safety, efficiency, economy and to adjust when there are changes in enrollment:
 - a. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall ensure that the stops occur in a manner to accommodate as many right turns as possible to reduce undue hazard and collision potential;

- b. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall arrange a student's and infant's designated stop directly in front of or near their residence on the same side of the road and away from intersections;
 - c. Drivers shall examine stops regularly and report new elements or hazards to the Head Bus Driver or designee; and
 - d. School vehicles shall not enter driveways or back up.
- 4. Only the Head Bus Driver or designee shall make changes to an established route:
 - a. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall notify the driver(s) when a route(s) is to be changed;
 - b. The ES or designee shall verbally notify parent(s) and guardian(s) about changes to a route affecting their children at least one day in advance, when possible, prior to the implementation of the revised route;
 - c. The ES or designee shall contact parent(s) and guardian(s) by telephone or in writing, as appropriate, to inform them of a temporary change to a route affecting their child(ren):
 - 1. Emergency roadway conditions due to accidents, inclement weather, roadway construction, or other emergency situations may necessitate a temporary change in an assigned route or stop(s); and
 - 2. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall make enough contacts with community agencies responsible for alerting vehicle operators of such temporary conditions or designated emergency routes.
- 5. When assigning "extra time" to drivers, the Head Bus Driver or designee shall utilize the [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers form** to ensure that the Drivers have all been given an equal opportunity to work additional hours in order to complete vehicle-related duties such as driving for school trips and activities:
 - a. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall write the names of all Drivers, in order of seniority, on the [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers form**;
 - b. For each activity requiring the assignment of extra time, the Head Bus Driver or designee shall write the name and date of the activity in the appropriate spaces on the [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers form**;
 - c. The Head Bus Driver or designee shall always offer an extra time assignment to the Drivers in the same order as they appear on the [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers form**, starting each time with the person whose name appears after the name of the last Driver to work extra time;
 - d. For each assignment offered by the Head Bus Driver or designee, the Bus Driver shall indicate if they accept or refuse the assignment by circling yes or no and writing their initials in the appropriate section of the form for that specific activity;
 - e. If a Bus Driver refuses an assignment, the Head Bus Driver or designee shall continue to rotate in succession through the pre-developed list on the form until a Driver accepts the assignment of extra time;

- f. When no Driver accepts an extra time assignment, the Head Bus Driver or designee shall assign the activity according to reverse seniority; and
 - g. The completed [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers forms** shall be maintained on file at the RS.
6. At the beginning of each week, the Head Bus Driver or designee shall give each Driver the list of students scheduled to be on that specific run.
 7. A parent or guardian shall contact the ES or designee prior to transporting their child to or from the RS.
 8. When a school receives a request or notification from a parent or guardian, eligible student, or school district regarding the transportation of a student to school on a regular basis by a means other than a DCF OOE school vehicle (i.e. parent driving student; district providing transportation other than for a medical transport, a continuation student, or other pre-approved arrangement), the ES shall inform the OOE Manager of Operations or Deputy Director who shall confer with the Director for a decision on a case-by-case basis.

2. Alteration or Cancellation of Transportation Services Due to Hazardous Weather or Road Conditions

1. When hazardous road conditions exist prior to the start of the school day, the ES or designee and the Head Bus Driver or designee shall confer about the decision to cancel or delay transportation services.
2. When a decision is made to cancel or delay student transportation services:
 - a. The ES or designee shall notify the designated radio station(s) or television stations to announce that either:
 1. The program is open, but no transportation will be provided; or
 2. Transportation will be delayed for a designated period;
 - b. The appropriate message should be announced at least one hour prior to the beginning of the scheduled school day; and
 - c. The ES shall notify the OOE Director of a delay or cancellation of transportation.
3. When hazardous road or weather conditions (verified through local police, highway authorities, or weather advisories) develop during the school day, the ES shall contact the Deputy Director and notify them about the decision to send the students home prior to the conclusion of the normal school day. Early dismissal shall be conducted as follows:
 - a. The ES or an OOE Administrator shall notify the Director, OOE or designee; and
 - b. The ES shall contact parents, guardians, and caregivers to inform them of the early dismissal, discuss pertinent issues such as the new drop-off time, and the need for a responsible adult to receive the student at the vehicle stop or make alternate arrangements.
4. If extreme weather conditions are predicted that day, the Driver or Escort shall advise the parents, guardians, and caregivers of a possible early dismissal when the students board the school vehicle that morning.

3. Boarding and Unboarding Procedures

1. When the Driver is not seated in the Driver's seat and is not actively involved in operating the wheelchair lift:
 - a. The transmission of the vehicle shall be in park;
 - b. The emergency brake shall be engaged;
 - c. The engine shall be turned off;
 - d. The keys shall be removed from the ignition and shall be in the possession of the Driver; and
 - e. The cell phone shall be removed from the vehicle by the Bus Driver.
2. The Driver shall permit only eligible students, infants, toddlers, authorized school personnel, adults serving as chaperones, and persons stipulated in a student's IEP to board the vehicle.
3. The Driver shall comply with the implementation of all requirements of "Abigail's Law" (P.L. 2015, c. 266) for school vehicles manufactured on or after July 17, 2016, which pertains to vehicles equipped with a sensor "to determine the presence of objects in the front or back of the school vehicle."
4. The Head Bus Driver or designee and Driver shall develop a Seating Arrangement Chart [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT14](#) for all infants and toddlers assigned to the vehicle:
 - a. A Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS) shall not be placed on a seat next to an emergency door or window;
 - b. On a two-person seat, the CSRS shall be placed next to the window; and
 - c. The student-parent of the infant or toddler shall sit on the seat next to the child, where possible. If not possible due to the number of students, infants, and toddlers in conformance with a and b above, an older infant and toddler may sit side by side.
5. Seating arrangements for students shall be determined by the ES, Head Bus Driver, or designee and shall be compatible with the route in terms of the order of loading and unloading:
 - a. Each student having a potentially serious medical condition or behavioral concern shall be seated so the escort can closely monitor the specific student while on the school vehicle; and
 - b. The mirror mounted in the front of the vehicle shall be positioned so that the escort can see and monitor all the students seated in front of the escort.
6. During the loading and unloading of students at a RS, vehicles shall be arranged in a single line. The following precautions shall be exercised when students, infants, and toddlers are boarding and exiting a vehicle:
 - a. During inclement weather, all loading and unloading of students, infants, and toddlers shall take place at the covered areas in front of each RS to help assure they are protected from the adverse weather conditions;
 - b. No vehicle shall be permitted to leave the single file formation, or pass another vehicle during the loading and unloading process;
 - c. When vehicles are in the loading and unloading formation, the Driver of each vehicle shall maintain enough distance to have clear vision of the rear wheels of the vehicle directly ahead; and

- d. Vehicles shall not move until all students, infants, toddlers, and staff are seated, all the required securement systems and procedures are properly implemented, and the doors are securely closed.
- 7. The Driver shall utilize the vehicle's warning lamps when students are boarding and exiting on public streets. The Driver shall:
 - a. Activate the amber warning lights 300 feet before the stop;
 - b. Turn on the flashing red lights when the vehicle stops for the purpose of receiving a student who is waiting at or approaching the designated stop, or for the purpose of discharging a student from the vehicle;
 - c. If waiting for a student who is inside their house, turn on the flashing red lights as the student begins to exit the house in order to avoid unnecessarily stopping traffic. Blowing the horn to summon a student is prohibited;
 - d. Ensure that the flashing red lights are plainly visible at such a distance as will enable the driver of a vehicle approaching the school vehicle to see the red light in sufficient time to bring their vehicle to a stop within at least 25 feet of the school vehicle; and
 - e. Continue to exhibit a flashing red light and not move the school vehicle until every passenger who has either entered or exited has reached a place of safety.
- 8. All traffic should be stopped before students are permitted to board or exit the school vehicle. While control of other motorists cannot be guaranteed, the Driver shall assure that:
 - a. Adequate warning has been provided;
 - b. The school vehicle position is correct;
 - c. Requirements have been met for stopping the school vehicle to allow boarding or exiting;
 - d. They continuously monitor all mirrors for students, traffic, and other objects; and
 - e. They make a final check to see that all traffic has stopped before completely opening the door and signaling students to approach.
- 9. All students shall remain seated and secured in their securement system until the school vehicle comes to a full stop at the location where students will be exiting.
- 10. Drivers shall adhere to the following procedure when students are boarding or exiting at a school vehicle stop:
 - 1. The waiting time at a designated stop shall be two minutes when either loading or unloading Project TEACH or TEC students.
- 11. Each student shall board and exit the school vehicle only at their designated stop. Alternate stops are prohibited.
- 12. The Driver shall immediately use the cellular phone to notify the ES or designee when a student leaves the school vehicle without permission at any place other than their home or approved drop-off site:
 - a. The Driver shall give the ES the name of the student and the location where the student left the school vehicle;

- b. The ES shall contact the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) about the situation; and
 - c. The student may be subject to suspension from transportation services for a duration determined by the ES. If the student is suspended from transportation, the ES shall notify the parent(s) or guardian(s) verbally and in writing regarding the offense and the duration of the transportation suspension. When a student is suspended from transportation, they are required to obtain their own transportation to and from the Regional School facility.
13. Each infant or toddler shall be escorted to and from the school vehicle by their student-parent:
- a. A student-parent shall be responsible for the boarding and exiting of their child; and
 - b. An infant's or toddler's student-parent shall not leave the school vehicle after the infant or toddler has boarded and been properly secured in the Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS).
14. A student requiring supervision, as determined collaboratively by the ES and the student's parent, shall be escorted to and from the designated stop by a parent, guardian, designated escort, or responsible person:
- a. The ES shall obtain, in writing, from the student's parent or guardian, the name, address, and telephone number of each individual for whom the parent designated as the responsible person to receive the student at the stop in the parent's absence. Notification of any changes to a designated escort or responsible person shall be made in writing by the parent or guardian and approved by the ES;
 - b. The Driver or Escort shall not be responsible for escorting a student to the designated stop or providing escort services to the student's home or another designated site once they have exited the vehicle;
 - c. A Driver or escort shall not enter a dwelling to assist with transferring a student to the designated stop;
 - d. When an ambulatory student requires assistance during boarding or exiting the school vehicle, the caregiver shall provide any assistance required outside of the vehicle; and
 - e. The escort shall remain on the school vehicle to assume responsibility for the direct care of students already onboard.
15. In the event the parent(s), guardian(s), or designee is not at the normal designated stop to accept a student within the allotted time:
- a. The Driver shall phone the RS to request that the parent, designated alternate escort, or responsible person be contacted to determine if they are available to accept the student;
 - b. The Head Bus Driver or designee, in consultation with the ES, shall advise the Driver to:
 - 1) go to an alternate stop, or
 - 2) continue the regular run;
 - c. As necessary, the ES or designee will continue attempts to contact the parent, designated alternate escort, or responsible person;

- d. The ES or designee will continue to advise the driver how to proceed (i.e. return the student to original stop at the end of the run); and
- e. If there is no other option but to return the student to the RS, the ES or designee shall be responsible for the student until appropriate arrangements can be made for the student (i.e. the parent, designated alternate escort, or responsible person picks up the student at the RS; the school transports the student again; another public entity intervenes).

16. Boarding Students in Wheelchairs:

- a. The Driver shall:
 - i. Put the transmission in park;
 - ii. Activate the warning light system;
 - iii. Engage the emergency brake;
 - iv. Open the door;
 - v. Operate the wheelchair lift;
 - vi. Check the student's positioning belts on the wheelchair to assure they are properly fastened;
 - vii. Place the centered wheelchair onto the lift with the back of the wheelchair facing towards the vehicle;
 - viii. Ensure the braking systems on the wheelchair are engaged; and
 - ix. Engage the lift and hold one hand on the wheelchair while the lift is in motion:
 - 1. A person assisting with the boarding shall be on the opposite side of the lift and shall hold onto a secure part of the wheelchair; and
 - 2. No person shall ride the lift except the student sitting in a wheelchair.
- b. The escort shall:
 - i. Ensure that all ambulatory students are seated and secured with a seat belt prior to boarding students in wheelchairs;
 - ii. When the wheelchair lift stops, receive each student in a wheelchair inside the vehicle, unlocking the wheelchair brakes and remove the wheelchair from the lift;
 - iii. Secure all wheelchairs in the vehicle in a forward-facing position;
 - iv. Ensure that a wheelchair is not placed next to the wheelchair lift;
 - v. Secure all students' safety belts and restraining systems; and
 - vi. Ensure that an individual student's oxygen, as applicable, is secured to the student's wheelchair.

17. Unboarding Students in Wheelchairs

- a. The Driver shall:
 - i. Put the transmission in park;
 - ii. Activate the warning light system;
 - iii. Engage the emergency brake;
 - iv. Open the door;
 - v. Remain at their seat until all ambulatory students have exited the vehicle through the bi-fold doors;
 - vi. Operate the wheelchair lift;

- vii. Activate the lift after the wheelchair is correctly in place and hold the wheelchair with one hand at all times as the lift is lowered:
 - 1. A person assisting with the unloading shall be on the opposite side of the lift and shall hold onto a secure part of the wheelchair; and
 - 2. No person shall ride the lift except the student sitting in a wheelchair.
- vii. Unlock the wheelchair brakes at ground level with assistance from the caregiver or RS staff and remove the wheelchair from the lift; and
- viii. Transfer the student to the designated responsible person(s), parent(s), guardian(s), caregiver(s), or RS staff.
- b. The escort shall:
 - ix. Remove the wheelchair from the securement system;
 - x. Position the wheelchair on the lift with the back of the wheelchair facing towards the vehicle; and
 - xi. Engage both braking systems on the wheelchair.
- c. When returning a student to their designated stop, neither the Driver nor the escort is responsible for assisting the student after they have exited or been removed from the lift and released to the designated responsible person.

4. Wheelchair Requirements

- 1. All wheelchairs accepted for school transportation shall meet all applicable standards, including being equipped with a Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) approved lap safety belt having a locking device and a torso securement device (i.e. chest strap or harness).
- 2. Prior to approval for school transportation, the parent or guardian shall:
 - a. Present the wheelchair for inspection by the Head Bus Driver or designee, the school physical therapist, the school occupational therapist, or the ES; and
 - b. Furnish the wheelchair manufacturer's written approval for school transportation. If the parent did not obtain this written approval, the school may call the manufacturer and confirm the wheelchair's approval for transportation.
- 3. It is the responsibility of the non-ambulatory student's parent(s) or guardian(s):
 - a. To provide a wheelchair designated by the manufacturer as appropriate for school transportation; and
 - b. To maintain the wheelchair in good repair, reliably functioning and in safe condition to include but not limited to:
 - i. Frame and wheel integrity;
 - ii. Brakes;
 - iii. Approved occupant securement belts;
 - iv. Anti-tipping, tilt and tilt locking mechanisms, as applicable;
 - v. Movable and adjustable attachments; and
 - vi. A firmly fixed seating insert.

4. When the condition of a wheelchair compromises a student's safety, the Escort or Driver shall inform the Head Bus Driver or designee and the ES on the day the condition is observed:
 - a. The ES shall notify a student's parent or guardian in writing when the student's wheelchair is in a condition compromising the student's safety in transit;
 - b. The ES shall notify the student's parent or guardian in writing that the identified student is suspended from school transportation until appropriate wheelchair repairs have been made; and
 - c. The ES shall address an extended student absence which results from problems with a student's wheelchair, utilizing all available resources including the student's district and child study team case manager.
5. Power wheelchairs shall be equipped with a gel-cel (non-liquid electrolyte) battery. Liquid electrolyte batteries shall not be permitted in any compartment of the school vehicle.
6. Lap trays shall be removed from the wheelchair during transportation and secured independently. When lap trays are required during transportation for medical purposes and are supported by a physician's note, the following conditions shall be met:
 - a. The area adjacent to the student shall be padded with dense foam at least five inches in width or with padding recommended by the student's physician; and
 - b. The lap tray shall be locked and affixed to the wheelchair at two locations.

5. Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS) Requirements

1. All CSRS required for transporting infants, toddlers, and students with disabilities on OOE school vehicles to a RS shall be furnished by the RS and meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 213.
2. Seat belt assemblies used to secure CSRS to the vehicle seats shall meet FMVSS 209, and seat belt assembly anchors shall meet FMVSS 210. Child restraint anchor systems, when used, shall meet FMVSS 225.
3. The Head Bus Driver or designee and the ES shall adhere to the instructions provided by the manufacturers of the CSRSs. These printed instructions include diagrams for step-by-step installation of their products and information regarding the positioning of a child and the adjustment of the systems to fit each child properly. These instructions include:
 - a. Minimum and maximum weights for which the CSRS is certified;
 - b. How the harness is threaded, adjusted and secured to the CSRS;
 - c. How the angle of recline is adjusted;
 - d. How to reassemble the CSRS correctly (after the harness has been cleaned, for example);
 - e. How to order missing parts; and
 - f. Other special characteristics of the CSRS.
4. In accordance to N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2a, a child under the age of two years and weighing less than 30 pounds shall be secured in a rear-facing child passenger restraint system, which is equipped with a five-point harness.

5. In accordance to N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2a, a child under the age of four years and weighing less than 40 pounds shall be secured in a rear facing child passenger restraint system, which is equipped with a five-point harness, until the child outgrows the top height or top weight recommendations made by the manufacturer of the child passenger restraint system. At this point the child shall be secured in a forward-facing child passenger restraint system equipped with a five-point harness.
6. All CSRSs placed on seats designed for two students shall be secured to the seat next to the window.
7. A CSRS shall not be installed on a seat next to an emergency door or window.
8. Prior to the initial transportation of an infant or toddler in the school's day care center, a student-parent shall be trained by RS staff in the proper use of the CSRS on a regional school vehicle then sign the [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT12](#), **CSRS Staff and Student Acknowledgement Form**
 - a. A student-parent is responsible for properly securing their child in the State of NJ Issued CSRS.
 - b. The escort, when present on the school vehicle, shall check to ensure that each child is correctly placed and secured in the CSRS before the vehicle begins to move.
 - c. The RS shall provide the CSRS for infants and toddlers. Students and parents are not permitted to provide their own CSRS.
6. **Emergency Information Forms**
 1. The Head Bus Driver or designee and Driver shall assure that each student, infant, and toddler has a current Emergency Information Form [OOE- Policy 36-ATT2](#), **Student/Infant Emergency Information Form**
 2. The Head Bus Driver or designee and Driver shall assure that the [OOE- Policy-37-C-ATT17C](#), **Staff Emergency Information Form** is available for each Driver and escort who has opted for their emergency contact information to be available on the school vehicle.

Key Terms (Definitions):

- Eligible student means an individual, age 3 through 21 years, who is enrolled in a DCF Regional School.
- Eligible infant and toddler mean a student-parent's child attending a Licensed Child Care Center provided at a DCF Regional School.
- Project TEACH means parenting or expecting academic program which provides onsite licensed day care facilities

Forms and Attachments:

- [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT11](#), **Rotation of Extra Time Assignments for Drivers**
- [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT12](#), **CSRS Staff and Student Acknowledgement Form**
- [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT14](#), **Seating Arrangement Chart**
- [OOE-Policy-37-C-ATT17C](#), **Staff Emergency Information Form**

Related Information:

- [Child Passenger Restraint Systems](#) resource document
- [Project TEACH](#) (Teen Education and Child Health) is an alternative, year-round education program for pregnant or parenting teens. Project TEACH serves students at risk of school failure.
- [Transitional Education Center](#) program is an alternative, year-round educational program designed to meet the need of an array of student who are at risk of school failure.

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